

Wirral Fostering Service

Parent and Child Fostering

Procedure

2020 - 2021

IT TAKES A BIG **HEART** TO FOSTER



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Appendix 1: Quality Assurance

1. Introduction

This policy should be implemented following:

- A pre-birth assessment; or
- Children's Safeguarding Conference which recommends a Parent and Child Placement.
- At the direction of the Court during Care Proceedings.

In exceptional circumstances, where the required assessments have not been completed, a clear plan with timescales must be agreed at the Placement Agreement Meeting for the completion of the assessment. Parent and Child Foster Care is an exceptional arrangement for very young babies and their parents. In exceptional circumstances the child could be older. However, where neither the child nor the parent is 'Looked After' a placement would not be considered.

2. Legal Context

There are three legal scenarios that apply to Parent and Child Fostering with different implications depending on the regulations that apply:

Parent 'Looked After' and Child 'Looked After'

Where the parent is under 18 and is 'Looked After' by the Local Authority and the child is also looked after by the Local Authority, each will be subject to all the requirements of the:

- *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;*
- *The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011*

Parent 'Looked After' but Child Not 'Looked After'

During Care Proceedings it could be that a child of a 'Looked After' parent under the age of 18 is placed with them, in a foster placement, under the:

- *Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010;*

The requirements of the 2010 Care Planning Regulations will only apply to both parent and child, but the 2011 Fostering Regulations will apply only to the parent.

Parent Not 'Looked After' but Child is 'Looked After'

In this situation the parent could be either under or over the age of 18, and only the child will be subject to all the requirements of the 2010 Care Planning and 2011 Fostering Regulations. The Regulations in relation to Placement with Parents will not apply and the parent will be considered as part of the fostering household. In this situation the parent, if under 18, will have been assessed but not identified as a 'Child in Need' in their own right.

3. Placement Agreement Meeting

The Placement Information Record and the Contract of Expectations should be completed and signed at the Placement Agreement Meeting. Failure to do so could result in a delay in making a placement or a poor placement outcome. A Pre-birth Assessment is expected in all cases, except where the pregnancy has been concealed or only identified at a late stage. In these cases, and where a placement is required in an emergency a Social Work Assessment of Need and Strengths should be completed as soon as is practicable.

A placement should be reviewed within the statutory review forum. Parent and child placements will be reviewed every six weeks within the 26-week timescales. Any decision making regarding extending the placement should be made on the basis of on-going assessments and monitoring of the placement. The placement should continue to be reviewed within the statutory review process. If any changes are made to the placement it will be the Social Workers responsibility to update the Contract of Expectations and notify all parties.

Wirral Fostering Service recognises their duty to Foster Carers and parents to ensure that the best help and support is provided from the outset and by establishing a clear Contract of Expectations it will clarify the roles and responsibilities to the placement for all parties involved.

All placements will have an assessment component. The prime aim of any placement should be to assess the safe parenting capacity of the parent. Where the parent is also a 'Looked After Child', realistic timescales for Independent Living should form part of the assessment and planning.

Parent and Child Fostering Placements should not be treated as the only means of assessing parenting skills. The Foster Carer will be informing the assessment, which is the responsibility of the child's Social Worker.

For a Parent and Child Placement to successfully meet its objectives there must be Multi-Agency working and assessments. The child's Social Worker will be responsible for taking the lead in negotiating with other Agencies to ensure that every placement is fully supported (e.g. Adult Social Services, Mental Health, Health Visitors, Family Centres, etc).

Where the child is in a placement and is subject to an Interim Care Order or a Care Order, Parental Responsibility will be shared, and the Local Authority will need to negotiate with the parent(s) the most appropriate arrangements for exercising their respective parental responsibilities. These arrangements must be discussed and agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting and recorded in both the Placement Information Record and Contract of Expectations.

As part of the Placement Planning Meeting a clear statement will be provided by the child's Social Workers to identify the objectives of the placement and the timescales of assessment. All those involved in the meeting must agree how progress towards meeting the objectives will be tracked and how success will be measured. This must be made clear to the parent and recorded in the Placement Information Record and Contract of Expectations.

Where the parent is also 'Looked After' various scenarios could apply. If the parenting assessment concludes that the parent is able to safely parent the child, then the aims and timescales of the placement must be re-negotiated to include clear criteria for moving on to independent Living or another form of supported arrangement not involving Fostering. Should, however the parent be assessed as unable to safely parent, then by the direction of the Court or with the agreement of the parent, the child should be moved to a different placement. This may also involve a change of placement for the parent if the placement is designated only as a parent and child placement. If the parent and child placement is subject to care proceedings the child's Social Worker must complete the relevant tasks that relate to the Placement with Parents Procedure.

DBS checks will be completed for parents who are over 18. This is set out in the statutory guidance for Fostering Services:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274220/Children Act 1989 fostering services.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274220/Children_Act_1989_fostering_services.pdf)

See Annex B: Parent and child arrangements (pages 57-59 - see para 12 on p58).

A copy of the Placement Information Record and Contract of Expectations should be given to:

- Parent
- Supervising Social Worker
- Child's Social Worker
- Foster Carer

4. Role of the Foster Carer

The Foster Carer(s) will be expected to offer guidance and assistance to the parent in managing the care tasks for the child. This may include direct instruction or modelling, it may include responding to questions, or it may include practical support such as accompanying the parent to Parent and Baby Groups, Health Visiting Clinic, shopping, etc.

The Foster Carer will be expected to show the parent how any technical appliances work so that they are able to use cooking and cleaning facilities appropriately. If the placement progresses positively it must be expected that the parent demonstrates less reliance on the Foster Carers support.

The Foster Carer should promote and support the key attachment between the child and the parent. The Foster Carer will be expected to keep a daily record noting observations of the parent's ability to respond to the child's needs, manage the routine and manage the practical tasks of washing, ironing, budgeting, etc. These observations will inform any parenting programme or assessment that has been agreed. The Foster Carers will be expected to be open and honest about the parent's strengths and difficulties when recording their observations and the parent must be given the opportunity to read and comment on these observations with the support of the child's Social Worker.

Foster Carers will agree to provide 24-hour support when required and any babysitting arrangements will be agreed in the Placement Planning Meeting and recorded in the Placement Information Record and Contract of Expectations.

The Foster Carer will provide a fully furnished bedroom complete with bed, cot and cot linen and ensure the parent has access to use the sitting room and home entertainment. The Foster Carer will make available and provide full use of toys and equipment for both inside and outside the home.

The Foster Carer and Supervising Social Worker will complete and provide an updated Safe Caring Plan in relation to the individual Parent and Child Placement. The Foster Carer will inform the parent of any household rules and routines and safe caring plan.

The Foster Carer will be expected to periodically check on the care and safety of the child in placement and therefore must have access to the child at all times whilst in the home environment. The Foster Carer should intervene if the level of risk to the child from a parent would be detrimental to their welfare.

The Foster Carer will always seek medical advice or treatment for any fall or injury that a child has sustained. A report of any injury should be made to the child's Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible.

The Foster Carer will respect and give recognition to the importance of a parent.

The Foster Carer will attend all meetings in relation to the Parent and Child Fostering Placement.

Foster Carers will receive full information prior to the placement from the child's Social Worker in relation to both the parent and child. If the information has not been received the carer must inform the Supervising Social Worker 2 days before the placement commences. If a placement is made on an emergency basis, the Foster Carer should expect to receive relevant information within 5 working days.

The Foster Carer will liaise with the child's Social Worker, Health Visitor and Supervising Social Worker and any other Professionals involved.

Should the placement be terminated because of a decision made by the Authority relating to serious breach of the Contract of Expectations, so that the wellbeing of the child is compromised or because the parent has left the placement without the agreement of the Local Authority, the expectation will be that the child will be moved to a child only placement.

Although the progress of the placement will be reviewed according to the schedule set out in the Contract of Expectations, the child will also be subject to the Looked After Children review process according to the statutory schedule, as will the parent is also looked after. The Foster Carer will remain the subject to the Foster Carer Review process.

Foster Carers offering Parent and Child Placements may do so alongside existing placements. When carers are holding a vacancy, a new placement will be considered in consultation with all those involved in the existing placement, but careful matching is paramount.

If it is not appropriate for the Foster Carer to take fostering leave during a Parent and Child Placement, no respite will be granted without prior discussion, unless this is a result of an emergency or has been pre-arranged.

Should any respite be necessary we are supportive of a child focussed practice and require that any respite is taken in line with the child's care plan and with the Social Work teams' agreement. We actively encourage carers to utilise their support network/close family members or friends who are known to the child.

5. Responsibility of the Parent(s)

Parent(s) will be expected to care for their children at all times. However, getting up, bathing, feeding and changing the child will be done so under supervision from the Foster Carer until it is agreed the supervision is no longer necessary.

Parent(s) will be expected to manage the day and bedtime routine, which fits in with the Foster Carer's household. When the parent is settling a child for bed it is their responsibility to check on the child throughout the evening and during the night as required.

Parents will be expected to demonstrate their competence in attending to all their child's physical needs as well as positively interacting with the child.

Parent(s) will be expected to shop, budget and cook for themselves and the child and attend to all the clothes washing and ironing. One of the placement aims will be for the parent to achieve greater independence and skills in these areas, unless otherwise agreed within the Placement Planning Meeting. This will be dependent upon the parent(s) ability.

The parent will keep their room tidy and leave the kitchen, bathroom and any other communal areas in a tidy, clean condition after use.

Personal clothing and belongings must be kept in the parent's own room. The Foster Carer cannot be responsible for property or articles which are lost or damaged.

The parent(s) will contribute to the wellbeing of everyone in the Foster Carer's home and public by demonstrating non-aggressive, non-threatening behaviours.

Foster Carer's may make random room checks to ensure the safety of the parent and the child and therefore all bedroom doors must be kept unlocked.

The Foster Carer will write accurate daily diary sheets, which will be shared with the parent(s), Supervising Social Worker and the child's Social Worker on a regular basis. It should be noted that there may be a request by the Courts in some circumstances for this type of information.

If there are any differences of opinion on childcare these should be discussed and recorded. However, the parent will need to accept the final decision from the Foster Carer who will endeavour to contact the Health Visitor or Social Worker at the first opportunity.

The Foster Carer will complete and share the Safe Caring Plan with the parent with support from the Supervising Social Worker.

Smoking is not permitted inside the Foster Carer's home. If a parent smokes it must be in the designated outside area. On returning to the home, the parent must wash their hands before contact with their baby.

If there are other children in the household the parent in placement must not provide any practical supervisory care.

No alcohols should be kept by parents in the Foster Carer's home.

No involvement with any illegal substances is permitted in the Foster Carer's home. However, it is recognised some parents may be supported in a parent and child placement whilst the parent is supervised by a treatment programme for drug or alcohol misuse. This should be discussed at the Placement Planning Meeting and recorded in the Placement Information Record and Contract of Expectations.

The parent(s) should inform the Foster Carer and child's Social Worker of any appointments and check if childcare cover is required.

Parent's circumstances and history is strictly confidential to the named Foster Carer's and not their families or friends. Parents can feel reassured that no discussions will take place between family members and friends unless there is a safeguarding issue.

Parents who are over the age of 18 and living with a Foster Carer is a member of the Foster Carer's household. The Fostering Service Safeguarding Policy identifies the measures that must be taken to safeguard children placed with Foster Carer's before any arrangements are made for a parent and child to join the household. The 2011 regulations allow for DBS enhanced checks to be obtained, although there is no requirement for the DBS to be undertaken as a pre-requisite to the individual joining the household. PNC checks will be completed by the Social Worker on all parents before a parent moves into the fostering household. This information will inform the risk assessment and will be shared with Foster Carers in order to ensure the safety of everyone in the household.

6. Role of the Supervising Social Worker

All Parent and Baby Foster Carers must be fully supported by a Designated and experienced Supervising Social Worker, who will offer 6 weekly support and supervision.

Any known or potential risks to the Foster Carer and their family from members of the child's family or others must be assessed. No Foster Carer or member of the Fostering Household should knowingly be placed at risk as a consequence of providing a placement.

The Supervising Social Worker must ensure that all relevant parent and child information is passed on by the child's Social Worker to the Foster Carer prior to the placement commencing. If this is not the case then the Supervising Social Worker should inform their Manager, who will make a decision as to whether the placement will go ahead or should be delayed.

The Supervising Social Worker will be responsible for monitoring, supporting, supervising and inspecting the management of the placement.

The Supervising Social Worker will visit in the first week of placement and six weekly visits will take place thereafter to provide supervision and support as well as weekly phone contacts. The Supervising Social Worker will also undertake unannounced visits. Parent and Child Placements will be reviewed every 6 weeks within the 26-week timescales for court. The Supervising Social Worker will attend these meetings alongside the Social Worker. If there are any concerns, then the review meetings can be brought forward.

The Supervising Social Worker will complete a room check.

The Supervising Social Worker will complete a health and safety check of the household on a yearly basis. During visits the Supervising Social Worker will check for any obvious hazards in the household.

7. Record Keeping

Foster Carers maintain an individual daily diary sheet on the children they look after. Maintaining records is an essential part of the Foster Carer's role and accurate factual recordings help monitor the child's progress. These recordings are shared with the Local Authority Social Worker and if applicable the court. The diary sheets also inform the social work assessment.

Foster Carers must email diary sheets to the Supervising Social Worker on a weekly basis.

The Supervising Social Worker will read and sign off all diary sheets and report any issues that are appropriate.

Supervising Social Worker to liaise with their Line Manager and the child's Social Worker to update on placements.

8. Policies and Procedures

All Foster Carers are able to access links to current policies, procedures and information on fostering law, complaints procedures, access to records, child protection, support, health issues, health and safety matters, education information, managing behaviour and various other subjects relevant to Foster Carers and the task of caring for a young person. If they need support to access these links, they should contact their Supervising Social Worker.

All carers will be given a copy of the Department's Complaints Procedure, 'Getting it Right' for if they feel they have been treated unfairly. However, we endeavour to reach a reconciliation with complainants before it becomes necessary to make a complaint.

If complainants feel we have not addressed their complaint, they are informed of their right to complain further to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Tel: 0300 123 1231.

These documents are reviewed regularly, and updates are issued as required to Foster Carers and staff.

9. Foster Carer Training and Support Groups

Supervising Social Workers will check with Foster Carers that they have researched and accessed groups or courses available (if appropriate) for the parent and child to access in the local area. This will be done in conjunction with the Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker.

Supervising Social Workers will identify what training will need to be undertaken by the Foster Carer during supervisory visits. It is the responsibility of the Foster Carer to book on to appropriate training and inform the relevant person if they cannot attend.

Training/support groups are run weekly. These are groups where information can be shared, any issues can be raised with the authority and most importantly carers can socialise together, learn from and support each other.

Support for Foster Carers' Own Children

We are committed to birth children's involvement within the service as they are an essential element to securing a positive family experience for children in care. Social Workers ensure they meet with birth children on a regular basis and we facilitate a group monthly for children to meet (KFC).

10. Role of the Child's Social Worker

The child's Social Worker must visit the placement regularly and make weekly phone or email contact in addition to the Supervising Social Work contact with the carer. During these visits Social Workers should discuss individually and together with parent and carer how the placement is going in relation to the contract and provide the opportunity to share any concerns or worries.

The Social Worker will attend a review of the placement every six weeks alongside the Supervising Social Worker.

The child's Social Worker should undertake a room check.

The child's Social Worker should check out any arranged appointments and childcare cover that needs to be approved by the Foster Carers and discussed with the Supervising Social Worker

The child's Social Worker needs to consider the second parent and attention and scrutiny must be given to the parent's relationships, both of their involvement in the assessment process and future planning.

Should a dispute arise with the placement the Supervising Social Worker and child's Social Worker will initially undertake joint visits. If necessary, the child's Social Worker will then arrange a follow up meeting to include the parent, Supervising Social Worker, Foster Carer and the child's Social Workers Team Manager.

The child's Social Worker will liaise with Housing Benefits and Senior Manager (if necessary) if the placement continues past 13 weeks. At this point, if the parent is in receipt of Housing Benefit then their entitlement will cease unless they return to the property and sleep overnight once a week.

To ensure prompt payment to the carers, the child's Social Worker will inform the Fostering Service of the placement start date, confirm the status of the parent and identify if the child is subject to Care Proceedings.

The child's Social Worker must ensure that the Foster Carer has all the relevant information before the Placement Planning Meeting. If the placement is made in an emergency, then the placement information must be supplied within five days.

The child's Social Worker should provide parent(s) with a complaint's procedure leaflet. If the parent is also a 'looked after' child, the Supervising Social Worker should provide a copy of the 'Children's Guide'.

11. Looked After Parents

The child's Social Worker must visit the placement within statutory requirements (See [Social Worker Visits to Looked After Children Procedure](#)). The Care Leaver's Social Worker will provide an opportunity for the parent to discuss any issues or worries and will assist the parent to address them.

Foster Carers will support the parent in relation to education, home tuition and legal appointments and provide transport and childcare if necessary.

Regard must be given to the parent's contract with their family members, time out (with and without baby), babysitting, household tasks and level of practical support.

12. Finance

We pay a fostering allowance directly into the Foster Carer's account by BACS transfer. All Foster Carers are self-employed and as such should pay their own Tax and National Insurance.

It is important that Foster Carers responsible for Parent and Baby Foster Placements are clear about Wirral's Fostering Service's expectations regarding financial support of the parent and their baby.

Parent and Child foster placements consist of three main financial categories:

(i) Parent 'Looked After' but Child is not 'Looked After'

When the parent is 'Looked After' and the child is not, the Foster Carer will be receive a Fostering Fee for both Parent and child, and a Fostering Allowance for the care of the parent but the child will be supported by the benefits that the parent will claim.

At the outset of the placement it is important that the parent is receiving all benefit entitlement. It should also be agreed what the Parent contributes towards the child and is written into the contract of expectations. If there are any delays in receipt of benefits, or the parents is not providing what is expected for their child, the Foster Carer must speak to their Supervising Social Worker.

(ii) Parent 'Looked After' and Child 'Looked After'

Where both the parent and child are 'looked after' the Foster Carer will receive a Fostering Allowance and a Fostering Fee for both the parent and child. The Parent will be able to claim benefits as long as they are not in full time education or working.

(iii) Parent not 'Looked After' but the Child is 'Looked After'

The Foster Carer will be paid both a Fostering Allowance and a Fostering Fee for the child but will only receive a Fostering Fee for the parent. The parent will be able to claim benefits to support themselves and their child.

It is important to ensure that the parent is receiving the benefits they are entitled to. The parent and their Social Worker should ensure that agencies responsible for Child Benefit, Income Support and Housing Benefit are informed about the start of the Parent and Baby Placement. The parent as claimant and their Social Worker are advised to inform Benefit Agencies about changes of circumstances when they occur. This will help to prevent overpayment of benefits to the claimant.

If there are delays in payment of benefit, the department will cover the shortfall, with the expectation that when the benefit is paid, the parent will arrange for the Foster Carer to repay the department.

The financial aspects of the Parent and Child Placements will be discussed in detail and agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting and will form part of the Contract of Expectation.

13. Structure of the Fostering Service

Paul Boyce is the Corporate Director for Wirral Children's Social Care and is responsible for the delivery of the Fostering Service.

The Fostering Service has moved into three dedicated specialisms:

- Recruitment and Assessment
- Mainstream Foster Care
- Connected Carers

The Wirral fostering service is responsible for establishing, maintaining and servicing the Wirral fostering panel. The panel, in carrying out its regulatory functions, makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker, (Simone White — Children and Families - AD).

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#bigheart